

MARCH 6, 1978

## ALGHANISTAN POPPIES

ANNCR:

BECAUSE OF THE GROWING EFFECTIVENESS OF NARCOTICS CONTROL MEASURES IN SUCH AREAS AS MEXICO AND THE SO-CALLED GOLDEN TRIANGLE--THAILAND, LAOS AND BURMA -- U.S. NARCOTICS AGENTS ARE AFRAID THAT ONE OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST PRODUCERS OF OPIUM -- AFGHANISTAN -- MAY BECOME THE NEXT MAJOR SUPPLIER OF THE WORLD MARKET. VOA SOUTH ASIA CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN RECENTLY VISITED AFGHANISTAN AND FILED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON HOW THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE WORKING WITH AFGHANISTAN TO CONTROL OR AT LEAST CONTAIN OPIUM PRODUCTION WITHIN MANAGEABLE LIMITS:

VOICE:

POPPY GROWING IS NOT NEW TO AFGHANISTAN. FOR CENTURIES THE PLANT HAS BEEN GROWN FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES. THE MAIN DERIVATIVE, OPIUM, IS VIRTUALLY THE ONLY MEDICINE KNOWN FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF AFGHANIS, ESPECIALLY THOSE LIVING IN RURAL AREAS WHERE IT IS USED AS A PAIN-KILLER, SOMETIMES TO RELIEVE THE PANGS OF HUNGER, OR AS A TREATMENT FOR DIARHEIA AND MANY OTHER MALADIES. WORKING MOTHERS ENGAGED IN SUCH OCCUPATIONS AS CARPET WEAVING HAVE USED IT AS A PACIFIER FOR THEIR SMALL CHILDREN, RUBBING SMALL AMOUNTS ON THEIR GUMS. SOME OF THE CHILDREN HAVE BECOME ADDICTS.

AFGHANISTAN, HOWEVER, HAS AS YET ONLY A MINOR ADDICTION PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM IS MORE SERIOUS IN NEIGHBORING IRAN, WHERE AFGHAN OPIUM IS MARKETED. WHAT IS BECOMING OF EVEN GREATER CONCERN TO OFFICIALS OF MANY OTHER COUNTRIES IS THE FACT THAT OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN APPEARS TO BE INCREASING.

OFFICIALS ESTIMATE THAT AFGHANISTAN COULD SUPPLY THE U.S. HEROIN MARKET SIX TIMES OVER. SO FAR AMERICAN DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENTS SAY THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY AFGHANI NARCOTICS REACHING THE UNITED STATES. BUT THEY BELIEVE IT MAY BE ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME. HOWEVER, AFGHANI OPIUM IS SHOWING UP ALL OVER WESTERN EUROPE, WHERE A MAJOR INCREASE IN ADDICTION HAS BEEN REPORTED.

THIS GROWING ADDICTION PROBLEM IS THE MAIN REASON WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE SHOWN INCREASED INTEREST RECENTLY IN EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE NARCOTICS TRADE. THE MAIN CHANNEL FOR THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN THE UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL (UNFDAC) (PRONOUNCED UHN-FIH-DACK).

UNFDAC IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH A MAJOR NEW PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN AIMED AT ERADICATION OF OPIUM PRODUCTION IN ONE AREA OF THE COUNTRY, A SMALL REGION IN THE NORTHERN PART OF HELMAND PROVINCE. THE U.N. AGENCY HAS FOCUSED ON THIS AREA BECAUSE THE GROWERS ARE MAINLY SMALL FARMERS WHO TURNED TO POPPIES AS THE FAILURE OF A CENTURIES-OLD IRRIGATION NETWORK FORCED THEM INTO SMALLER AND SMALLER PLOTS CLOSE TO THE HELMAND RIVER. THE UPPER HELMAND PROJECT, AS IT'S CALLED, OFFERS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH THAT EMBRACES NOT ONLY CROP AND INCOME SUBSTITUTION BUT ALSO AN ENTIRE RANGE OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND A LONG RANGE PROGRAM AIMED AT REHABILITATION OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

DESPITE THE WILLINGNESS OF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ACTION, PROGRESS IS PAINFULLY SLOW. THE UPPER HELMAND AREA ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF AFGHANISTAN'S TOTAL OPIUM PRODUCTION. BY FAR THE LARGEST PRODUCTION IS IN A RUGGED AND REMOTE AREA ALONG THE PAKISTANI BORDER WHERE NEITHER COUNTRY IS ABLE TO EXERCISE MUCH CONTROL OF ANY KIND. THE AREA, WHICH

IS TRAVERSED BY THE FAMED KYBER PASS, IS REMINISCENT OF AMERICA'S WILD WEST. THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT HERE THE GUN-TOTERS ARE NOT COWBOYS BUT FARMERS OR SMUGGLERS, AND THEIR BUSINESS IS GROWING AND DEALING IN OPIUM.

THE BATTLE TO CONTROL NARCOTICS ABUSE IN AFGHANISTAN IS A SLOW AND OFTEN FRUSTRATING PROCESS, AND THE PROGRESS IS MEASURED IN INCHES. BUT OFFICIALS OF THE U.N. FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL BELIEVE THAT THE INTEGRATED APPROACH OF THE UPPER HELMAND PROJECT OFFERS A GOOD HOPE OF SUCCESS AND COULD SERVE TO INSPIRE GREATER ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

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